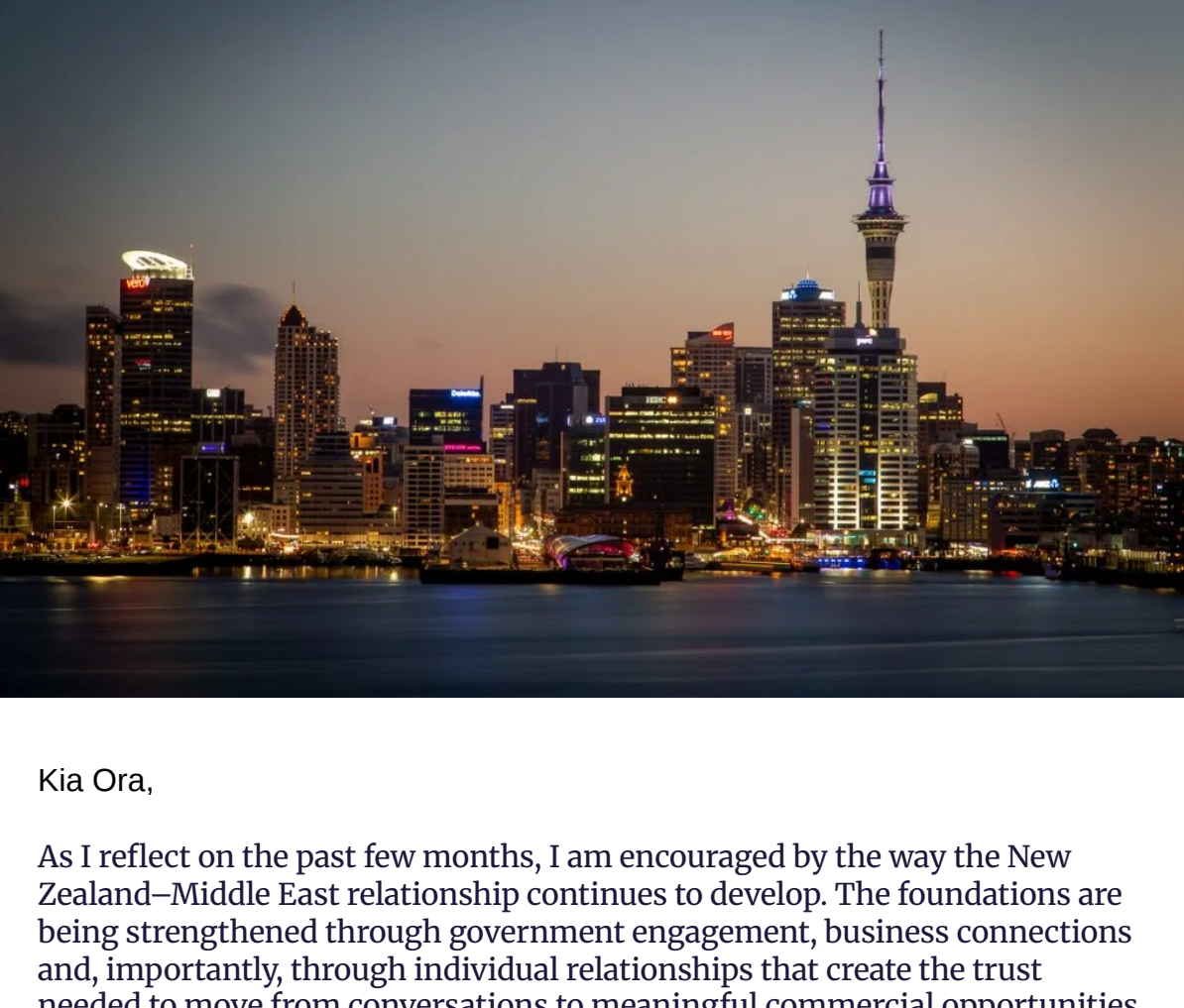




Kia Ora,

As I reflect on the past few months, I am encouraged by the way the New Zealand–Middle East relationship continues to develop. The foundations are being strengthened through government engagement, business connections and, importantly, through individual relationships that create the trust needed to move from conversations to meaningful commercial opportunities.

Our July newsletter focused on Building Trust, Growing Trade. This edition builds on that theme by looking more closely at what happens when those relationships develop into a deeper understanding of markets, people and opportunities. For NZMEBC, this is an important part of our role — helping our members not only make connections, but better understand where their capabilities can contribute and where genuine partnerships can be developed.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting with H.E. Hasnaa Qassam from the Republic of Iraq Embassy and H.E. Sabah Al Sabah, Ambassador from the Embassy of the State of Kuwait. In this edition, we look at Iraq and Kuwait as our Countries of Interest, bringing perspectives from both Ambassadors. Both conversations point to relationships that extend well beyond traditional trade. In Iraq, the focus is on opportunities across agriculture, education, healthcare, infrastructure, energy and technology, alongside the potential for investment, knowledge exchange and longer-term partnerships. In Kuwait, the message is similarly about moving beyond a traditional export relationship towards investment, technology partnerships, joint ventures, knowledge transfer and building with New Zealand.

We also continue our Member Spotlight series, which is an important way of showing the breadth of capability within NZMEBC. This month we feature Swiss-Belhotel International, whose New Zealand and Middle East operations demonstrate the increasingly diverse connections between our two regions. Its activities span hospitality, tourism, investment, property development, technology, professional services and workforce development. We are highlighting a new member in this edition – OneReg, which will add yet another perspective to the breadth of expertise represented within our membership.

Another member story provides a particularly strong example of New Zealand capability delivering results in the region. Safe365, led by Co-Founder and Executive Director Mark Kidd, has been building its presence in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Its work with Saudi Railway Company demonstrates how New Zealand–developed technology and expertise can be applied to major organisations in the region, with the case study reporting significant improvements in safety culture and reductions in harm.

Looking Ahead: Saudi Arabia Delegation  
Looking ahead, we are particularly excited about the significant Saudi Arabian business and government delegation coming to New Zealand from 14–16 October, led by the Minister of Commerce, H.E. Majid bin Abdullah Al Qasabi.

We are expecting around 60 Saudi business people and government officials to be part of the delegation, with interests spanning agriculture, agri-technology, food industries, mining, transport and logistics. This represents an important opportunity for New Zealand businesses to engage directly with Saudi counterparts and to showcase the capability and innovation that New Zealand can bring to these sectors.

The visit is also a practical example of the type of relationship-building that NZMEBC is committed to supporting. We see considerable value in bringing businesses and government together, creating the opportunity for conversations that can develop into partnerships, investment, technology collaboration and longer-term commercial relationships.

NZMEBC will be confirming events and engagement opportunities around the delegation in the coming days, and I encourage members with relevant interests to watch for further information and make the most of this opportunity to connect.

Our stories in this edition are a useful reminder of why the NZMEBC exists. The Middle East is not one market, and there is no single pathway to success. The opportunities are found through understanding individual countries, identifying the right partners, building trust and being prepared to take a long-term view.

As we continue to grow the Council, I encourage members to use the network — to share your experiences, introduce one another, explore new markets and, most importantly, keep the conversations going. The strongest international relationships are built over time, and every connection creates the possibility of something further.

Thank you to all our members, contributors and partners who continue to support the work of NZMEBC. Our relationships are maturing, our networks are expanding, and the opportunities for collaboration are becoming more strategic than ever before.

Ngā mihi,  
Jude Hadfield  
Chair, New Zealand Middle East Business Council

## Countries of Interest

As part of NZMEBC's Countries of Interest series, Chair Jude Hadfield recently had the pleasure of sitting down with two distinguished diplomatic representatives, H.E. Sheikh Sabah Alsbah, Kuwait Ambassador to New Zealand, and H.E. Hasnaa Qassam, Chargé d'Affaires of Iraq to New Zealand.

These conversations provided valuable insight into the evolving relationships between New Zealand, Kuwait and Iraq, and the opportunities that exist to strengthen trade, investment and wider commercial connections. Both discussions highlighted a shared ambition to build deeper partnerships, encourage greater private-sector engagement and create new opportunities for businesses across New Zealand and the Middle East.

In the following features, we share insights from these conversations and explore the potential for stronger economic and people-to-people ties with Kuwait and Iraq.

### Country of Interest: Kuwait

Feature based on the interview with H.E. Sheikh Sabah Alsbah, Kuwait Ambassador to New Zealand



**Kuwait: Building a Broader and Deeper Partnership with New Zealand**  
From traditional trade to investment, technology, knowledge exchange and long-term commercial partnerships.

Since taking up his role as Kuwait's Ambassador to New Zealand in 2025, H.E. Sheikh Sabah Alsbah has set out a clear ambition: to deepen the relationship between Kuwait and New Zealand across diplomatic, economic and people-to-people ties, with particular emphasis on stronger business engagement, investment and commercial cooperation.

Just as importantly, he wants New Zealanders to develop a better understanding of modern Kuwait — a country he describes as outward-looking, commercially connected and increasingly focused on economic diversification, private-sector development and high-quality international investment.

To read the full article click here

Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority

### Country of Interest: Iraq

Country of Interest Feature based on the interview with H.E. Hasnaa Qassam, Chargé d'Affaires of Iraq to New Zealand



**Iraq: Building a Stronger Partnership with New Zealand**  
As Iraq's Chargé d'Affaires to New Zealand, H.E. Hasnaa Qassam has arrived in NZ with a clear ambition – to strengthen the bilateral relationship between Iraq and New Zealand, with a particular focus on economic and trade connections and greater cooperation between the two countries' private sectors.

For the NZMEBC, her new appointment provides an opportunity to look beyond the traditional perceptions of Iraq and explore the potential for a broader relationship — one encompassing trade, investment, technology, education, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and people-to-people connections.

#### A Changing Iraq and a Changing Region

Iraq occupies an important geographical and geopolitical position in the Middle East, with relationships across its neighbours and the wider international community. H.E. Qassam describes Iraq's current approach as one of active neutrality and balanced diplomacy, grounded in its constitution and focused on protecting Iraq's national interests. She emphasises Iraq's intention to maintain positive and constructive relations with its neighbours and international partners without aligning itself with competing regional blocs. In her view, Iraq's position and relationships also enable it to play a constructive role in building bridges between conflicting parties and in fostering economic ties that can contribute to regional stability.

To read the full article click here

Invitation to Participate in the 50th Baghdad International Fair

## Celebrating Saudi Arabia's 96th National Day in Wellington

NZMEBC Chair Jude Hadfield was pleased to attend the Saudi National Day Celebrations in Wellington, marking the 96th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The occasion provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Kingdom, while connecting with members of the diplomatic, government and business communities and recognising the growing relationship between New Zealand and Saudi Arabia.

NZMEBC values the important connections between our two countries and looks forward to continuing to support opportunities for stronger trade, business relationships and collaboration.

Our warmest congratulation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its people on this special occasion.



## Member's Spotlight

### swiss-belhotel INTERNATIONAL HOTELS & RESORTS

#### Swiss-Belhotel International

Global hospitality. New Zealand roots. A growing presence across the Middle East. Swiss-Belhotel International (SBI) is a Hong Kong and New Zealand based global management group managing hotels, resorts and residences throughout the Asia-Pacific, Southeast Asia, China, the Middle East and Africa. Its philosophy brings together Swiss professionalism with Asian passion and service, with a strong focus on personalised guest experience, international standards and long-term owner partnerships.

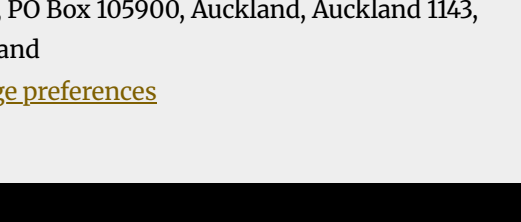
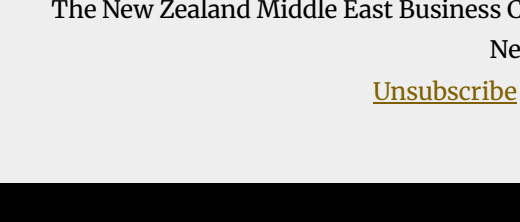
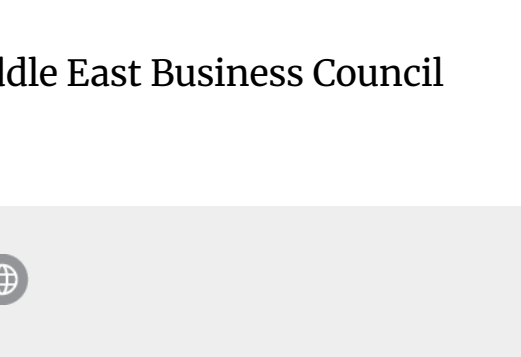
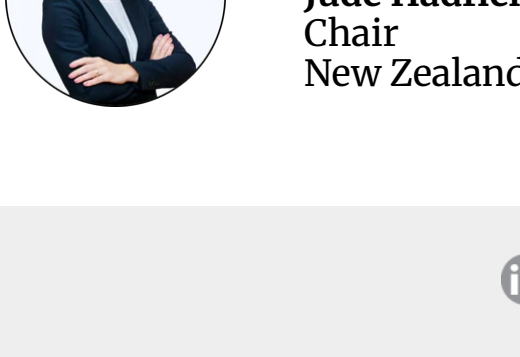


To read the full article click here



### OpenStar Technologies

Earlier this year, OpenStar Technologies fully commissioned their levitated dipole prototype device, "Junior," with the achievement of fully levitated plasmas. The milestone drew the attention of Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, who pressed the button to initiate plasma, and Minister Shane Jones, who weeks earlier had committed a \$35 million loan through the Regional Infrastructure Fund to support OpenStar's next device. Since then, the team has been upgrading Junior and running experiments to find its operational limits. They've published their second peer-reviewed paper, presenting the first viable design for a D-T fuelled levitated dipole power plant, and are now turning their efforts toward a levitated dipole device capable of producing medical radioisotopes which are life-saving treatments used by cancer patients worldwide and are an inherent capability of the levitated dipole architecture.



### Mark Kidd, Safe 365

Taking New Zealand Safety Innovation to the Middle East  
Safe365 is a New Zealand-founded health, safety and risk management technology company focused on helping organisations measure, understand and improve their safety culture. The company was established in 2016 by co-founders Mark Kidd and Nathan Hight, in response to the changing health and safety environment in New Zealand. Safe365 has developed digital tools that move organisations beyond traditional compliance approaches by using data, benchmarking and evidence to identify risk drivers and support continuous improvement. Today, the company works with organisations internationally.

Mark Kidd, Co-Founder and Executive Director, has been instrumental in taking Safe365's proposition into international markets. Safe365's international growth has included work with major organisations and airports in the UK, while the Middle East has become an important area of expansion. Mark joined the NZ Middle East Business Council in 2024 with a focus on building connections and scaling Safe365's presence in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. NZMEBC has supported Mark and the Safe365 team as they have developed relationships and opportunities across the region.

The Saudi Railway case study that follows provides a compelling example of this work in practice. Safe365's approach with Saudi Railway Company (SAR) has focused on measuring safety culture, identifying the behavioural and organisational drivers of risk, and using evidence to support targeted improvement. The case study reports a 62% reduction in injuries measured by LTIFR, a 60%+ reduction in near misses, a 68% reduction in yard collisions, and an increase in SAR's Safety Culture Index from 50% to 57% between 2024 and 2025. SAR's recognition at the 2026 IIRSM Awards and the British Safety Council's CEO of the Year award provides an important regional example of the impact of this work.

The case study that follows demonstrates the value of this NZMEBC connection: a New Zealand company, a NZMEBC member, a founder building relationships in the region, and New Zealand-developed capability being applied to a major Saudi organisation

To read the full case study click here



### OneReg

OneReg is a regulatory assurance platform for airports and airlines, providing a unified system for managing compliance, safety and regulatory data. The platform enables aviation operators to streamline audits, reduce operational risk and maintain a single source of truth across complex regulatory environments – reducing the time, complexity, and human resource cost of staying safe and compliant. The result is safer, smarter, more sustainable aviation.

The Middle East is one of the world's most ambitious aviation markets. Despite geopolitical uncertainty, the region continues to show resilience and invest in airport capacity, new airlines, fleets, and digital capability. Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, for example, is helping build a broader aviation ecosystem through investments including Riyadh Air and AviLease, aligned with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 ambitions.

To read the full article click here

## Upcoming Events

Saudi Delegation - 14 - 16 October

The Business Council will be hosting events with the Saudi Federation of Chambers who will be joining a large delegation from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 14–16 October. The delegation is being led by H.E. Majid bin Abdullah bin Osman Al Qasabi the Minister of Commerce. The delegation will be focussing on the agri-sector, transport and logistics, and mining. Planning is underway at the moment and we will let members know which events they will be able to attend.

For any questions or further information, please visit our website at [nzmebc.org.nz](https://nzmebc.org.nz) or contact us at [operations@nzmebc.org.nz](mailto:operations@nzmebc.org.nz). Stay connected and follow [NZMEBC on LinkedIn](#) for the latest news, business insights, upcoming events, and opportunities across New Zealand and the Middle East.



Best regards

Jude Hadfield  
Chair  
New Zealand Middle East Business Council



The New Zealand Middle East Business Council, PO Box 105900, Auckland, Auckland 1143, New Zealand

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)